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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0295
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3398
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1216
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1083
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1652
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1392
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KIRF](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: RUHNAMA - GOING, GOING...

REF: ASHGABAT 0219

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

LESS EMPHASIS ON READING RUHNAMA AND MORE ON WRITING AND
ARITHMETIC

12. (SBU) Since Berdimuhamedov became president in February 2007, former President Niyazov's "Book of the Soul," has become increasingly irrelevant. While still in principle a required course in schools, it appears now to be barely that.

One source, the mother of an 8th-grade girl, said Ruhnama classes are now only one hour/week. In addition, the so-called "Presidential Desk," in the school, which was covered in green felt and adorned with books written by Niyazov, has been removed, reportedly under orders from the Ministry of Education. (NOTE: Desks, corners, or even rooms dedicated to the Ruhnama and writings of the former president used to be de rigueur for government buildings, including schools and ministries. END NOTE.)

13. (SBU) In addition to a decreased emphasis on Ruhnama schools have started to promote other academic and cultural pursuits. For example, the director of this source's daughter's school has begun to organize foreign-language contests for the students, something that would not have been possible under Niyazov. They also have put on plays by French and English playwrights, including "Romeo and Juliet." And the introduction of foreign culture is not just limited to the classics. The school is also planning rock music and break dance performances by the 9-10th grade classes. (COMMENT: Niyazov must be spinning in his mausoleum! END COMMENT.)

NO LONGER LIGHTING THE WAY

14. (SBU) Since late January 2008, daily televised readings of the "Ruhnama" have been discontinued, and many of the "Ruhnama" signs scattered around town have been replaced by

pictures of symbols in which Turkmen take pride, such as the high-rise buildings in downtown Ashgabat and the famous Ahalteke horses. One example is the neon Ruhnama sign that used to be on the corner next to the DCM's Residence. For years it was used as a landmark for people going to the DCR and other houses in that neighborhood, including the French ambassador's residence. However, on February 9, the neon Ruhnama was replaced by a poster with an Ahalteke horse and high-rise buildings.

WIDER, MORE PRACTICAL SELECTION OF BOOKS

15. (SBU) Previously, many book stores in Turkmenistan sold primarily Ruhnama, albeit sometimes in different languages. That has also changed over the past year. EmbOff recently visited a book store that previously carried only Turkmenistan government publications, but now has copies of books for sale in Russian by Donald Trump, Dale Carnegie, and other business gurus.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: More than a sign that the Ruhnama is fading into the past, these changes also show how Turkmenistan is increasingly allowing, and sometimes promoting, elements of international culture. While the switch from Ruhnama to books on doing business reflects President Berdimuhamedov's own emphasis on Turkmenistan reaching international standards, it is also true that learning more about "the art of the deal" or rap music are just a part of joining the world community. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND